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Agenda item 61 (a)

Advancement of women: advancement of women

**Letter dated 29 August 2007 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the
Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations addressed to
the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 19 June 2007 addressed to you by H.E. Ursula Plassnik, Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of the Republic of Austria, and H.E. Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State of the United States of America (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 61 (a).

(Signed) Christian Ebner
Chargé d'affaires a.i.



**Annex to the letter dated 29 August 2007 from the Chargé
d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Austria to the
United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

**Letter dated 19 June 2007 from H.E. Ursula Plassnik, Minister
for European and International Affairs of the Republic of Austria,
and H.E. Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State of the United States
of America, addressed to the Secretary-General**

On 31 May 2007, the Women Leaders Working Group met in Vienna to discuss strategies for the empowerment of women in the area of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The meeting took place in the context of an international conference on "Women Leaders — Networking for Peace and Security in the Middle East".

Women have important contributions to make to conflict resolution and peacebuilding, both on a local and on an international level. To ensure that these contributions are effectively heard and used, the Steering Group agreed on a set of recommendations (see enclosure).

In particular, the Steering Group asks that you establish, as a matter of priority, a mechanism to increase the number of women considered for United Nations special representatives and envoy positions, including as heads of peace operations. There are currently no women among the 54 special representatives of the United Nations Secretary-General to conflict and post-conflict regions.

The Women Leaders Working Group looks forward to continued dialogue and collaboration with your office.

(Signed) Ursula Plassnik
Foreign Minister of Austria

(Signed) Condoleezza Rice
United States Secretary of State

Enclosure**Meeting of the Women's Empowerment Network
Steering Group
Vienna, 31 May 2007****Recommendations on the empowerment of women in the area
of conflict resolution and peacebuilding**

On 31 May 2007, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Austrian Federal Minister for European and International Affairs Dr. Ursula Plassnik hosted a meeting of the Women's Empowerment Network Steering Group in Vienna to discuss strategies for the empowerment of women in the area of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The meeting took place in the context of an International Conference "Women Leaders — Networking for Peace and Security in the Middle East".

Women have important contributions to make to conflict resolution and peacebuilding, both on a local and on an international level. To ensure that these contributions are effectively heard and used, the Steering Group agreed on the following recommendations:

- The Steering Group urges the Secretary-General of the United Nations to set up a mechanism to increase the number of women among United Nations special representatives and envoys including as heads of peace operations. The fact that there is currently no woman among 54 United Nations envoys to conflict and post-conflict regions is unacceptable.
- The Steering Group commits itself to work towards the nomination of more women as envoys and mediators also in other international and regional organizations.
- Whenever visiting conflict or post-conflict regions such as the Middle East, Steering Group members will hold consultations with women's groups and women human rights defenders.
- The Steering Group calls upon the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission to effectively integrate a gender perspective into all aspects of its work and to ensure that women are included in peace processes.
- The Steering Group reaffirmed the need to strengthen the gender architecture of the United Nations, with a view to ensure a more effective and efficient delivery of United Nations gender-related programmes and mandates in the field.
- The Steering Group further calls upon national and international actors to systematically review their cooperation programmes with a view to introduce targeted gender-related activities into their strategies and programmes on peace and security.

Steering Group members further decided to nominate focal points within their offices to ensure effective implementation of these recommendations and to coordinate future activities of the Women's Empowerment Network.

List of participants

Host: H.E. Ursula Plassnik

Federal Minister for European and International Affairs, Austria

Co-Chair: H.E. Condoleezza Rice

Secretary of State of the United States of America

H.E. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa

President of the United Nations General Assembly (Bahrain)

H.E. Benita Ferrero-Waldner

European Union Commissioner for External Relations

H.E. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic

Minister for Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Republic of Croatia

H.E. Antoinette Batumubwira

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Burundi

H.E. Kinga Göncz

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary

H.F. Sumeira Malik

Minister for Women's Development, Islamic Republic of Pakistan
